



The Quarterly Quill

Winter 2003

Newsletter from the City Council of Williamsburg, VA

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A Perspective on the City's Economic Future

~By Clyde Haulman, Williamsburg City Council Member

From colonial times to the present, Williamsburg's economy has been dominated by a single sector – the colonial government then, tourism now. The tourism focus of our city's economic base today creates challenges as we strive to sustain and enhance the quality of services to our citizens, and as we attempt to envision our community's economic future. The current situation is exacerbated by long-term trends affecting our economy including the decline in historical tourism nationally, the slowing of revenue streams as the community develops and grows beyond the city's boundaries, the limited amount of developable land within the city, and the city's aging population.

Further, the economic health and vitality of our two major employers, William and Mary and Colonial Williamsburg, has been hurt by the fiscal policies of recent Governors and General Assemblies. The drying up of funding for higher education has forced William and Mary to cut programs and services and raise tuition. The state's once vibrant tourism advertising campaign – remember "Virginia is for Lovers" – has disappeared and extraordinary efforts by Colonial Williamsburg, local hotels and businesses, and the city have fallen far short of making up the difference.

Given our current circumstances, what actions might we take to help ensure the city's future economic vitality? Restructuring Virginia's antiquated tax structure to enhance revenues so that the Commonwealth can meet its responsibilities in such areas as education, transportation, and corrections while providing cities with fiscal flexibility is a critical first step. Beyond that, we must push for higher education funding and funding for tourism advertising to return as priorities in the state budget.

A second direction is to seek new economic opportunities that are compatible with our city's existing infrastructure and with our shared vision for the future. The proposed geriatric research center and High Street project are steps in this direction. But, the city must continue to be proactive in seeking and identifying such opportunities. This may mean rethinking the role of city staff in the area of economic development.

A complement to seeking new opportunities, is the thoughtful redevelopment of other areas in ways that are consistent with quality economic activities and our vision of ourselves. A full range of options including zoning, infrastructure improvements, and Industrial Development Authority loans may be needed to achieve these results.

Finally, ensuring the continued vitality of our city's neighborhoods is critical to the success of any economic development effort. This requires aggressive enforcement of existing programs, the development of new options to encourage owner occupancy in threatened neighborhoods, and the linking of our neighborhoods with shopping and entertainment through a network of walking and bicycle paths, improved sidewalks, and safe pedestrian crossings.

No one has all the answers to guarantee the future economic health of our city. Yet, working together through existing boards and commissions, in the comprehensive planning update, and through continued active citizen involvement in the life of our community we are capable of finding such answers. And, my experience with our community over the years instills confidence that we will find those answers that are right for us.

News Worthy

- Waller Mill Park will remain closed until March 1, 2004, while logging crews continue to clear debris from Hurricane Isabel. Once opened, the park may still have limited or restricted use of some areas while cleanup continues. Annual pass holders will have their privileges extended to compensate for the facility's closed period. For further questions, please call Parks and Recreation at 259-3760.
- The 2004 vehicle decals will be mailed out beginning in January. Your 2003 personal property taxes must be paid to receive a 2004 decal. Please notify the Commissioner of the Revenue Office (220-6150) with any changes regarding your address and vehicle registration.
- Christmas tree collection is scheduled for January 5 and January 12, 2004. Please place trees curbside before 7:00 am for pick-up. Discarded trees will be mulched and used for City landscaping projects.
- Seasonal decorations, including Christmas lighting, may be displayed between Thanksgiving and January 6, 2004 (City Ordinance #02-15).
- Holiday Garbage Schedule: Christmas Day garbage will be picked up Saturday, December 27 and New Year's Day will be picked up Saturday, January 3, 2004.

Downtown Parking Improvements

With the opening of the Prince George Parking Garage, expected early next year, the time is right to make changes which will allow the garage to operate as part of an improved downtown parking system. The downtown parking is more complex than it at first appears. It encompasses management of on-street parking and off-street parking, both free and paid. Off-street parking is predominately owned by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and enforced by the City, and now the City will directly own and operate the largest single parking facility.

For the parking system to function well, parking policies, regulations and enforcement must be coordinated. Directional signage to all parking available for public use must also be coordinated. Our goal is to make parking as available and easy to use as possible.

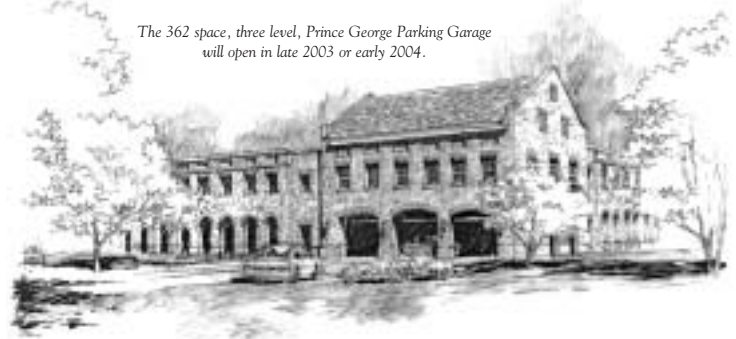
PRINCE GEORGE PARKING GARAGE

The 362 space facility will be operated by the Police Department. The Department will be responsible for customer assistance and security in the garage, as well as enforcement of parking regulations on-street and off-street in the downtown area.

Customers entering the garage will take a ticket before parking.

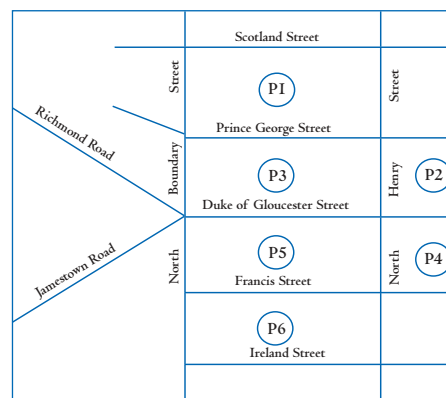
When ready to leave, customers will visit one of the two automated, pay-on-foot stations located in the southeast pedestrian entrance. Customers can pay by cash or credit card. The pay system is the same system installed by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in its one downtown pay lot. Pricing likewise will be the same for both Colonial Williamsburg and City at \$1.00 per hour.

The 362 space, three level, Prince George Parking Garage will open in late 2003 or early 2004.



DOWNTOWN PARKING SITE IDENTIFICATION

Downtown parking needs to be as convenient and easy to find as possible. Working with Colonial Williamsburg, the downtown parking sites will be numbered as follows:



The four most convenient lots would be predominantly geared to "short stay" visitors:

P2, P3, P4, P5 Free. Short stay. Signs will let people know that longer stay parking is available nearby.

The city's parking garage and Colonial Williamsburg paid lot at Francis and Henry Streets would be geared to "long stay" visitors:

P1 and P6 One dollar per hour.
No time limit.

PARKING DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

A unified system of directional signage on the streets accessing the six parking sites is needed to help visitors easily find parking. An attractive, clear, coordinated system of signs will be installed using the "P#" locators. To design the signs, the city has worked with a graphic designer specializing in "wayfinding" systems. The new signs will replace the existing "Merchants Square" parking signs. In the future, maps of the downtown area, including Colonial Williamsburg's Visitor Companion, will show the parking lot numbers to match the signage.

PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The key to keeping convenient, free, short stay parking spaces available to the public is effective enforcement. Many communities control short stay parking with parking meters. That has never been the Williamsburg way, so effective enforcement of overtime parking is essential.

The city currently charges \$10 for overtime violators, which is on the low end of many Virginia communities. At the November City Council meeting, graduated parking fines for the city were approved effective January 1, 2004. During a 60-day period, which begins with the first overtime parking violation, fines will graduate as follows:

1st violation\$10.00
2nd violation\$30.00
3rd violation\$50.00

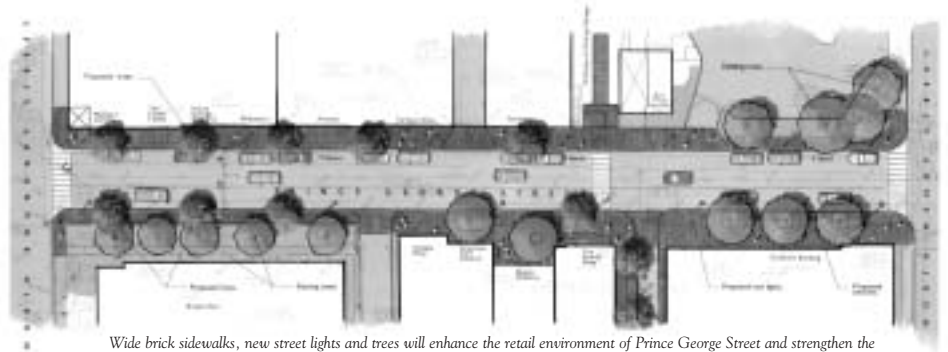
Downtown parking changes have been developed in consultation with downtown business leaders and the city's parking consultants, Desmond and Associates. These changes, once implemented, will be subject to review as the city continues to work for the best possible downtown parking solutions.

Making Great Downtown Streets Even Better

Prince George Street and Boundary Street streetscape improvements will compliment the major new projects in the Merchants Square area - the Prince George Parking Garage and the College Corner Building. On Prince George Street, new brick sidewalks will be constructed with careful detailing, four feet wider on the north side and two feet on the south side. New colonial style street lights and street trees will be added. A new pedestrian crossing on Prince George Street will connect the Parking Garage to Merchants Square.

The Boundary Street improvements will provide new brick sidewalks at least seven feet wide from College Corner to Scotland Street. New street lights and street trees will also be installed.

These improvements will reinforce the pedestrian friendly, aesthetically pleasing character of downtown Williamsburg, and will connect "City Square" and Transportation Center area with the Merchants Square area of downtown. Beginning in January 2004, streetscape construction will be completed in mid 2004.



Wide brick sidewalks, new street lights and trees will enhance the retail environment of Prince George Street and strengthen the connections between the new Prince George Parking Garage to the north and an expanding Merchants Square to the south.

Law Enforcement Accreditation Award

Williamsburg Police Chief Mike Yost and Accreditation Manager Deby Middlebrook proudly received the Williamsburg Police Department's fifth consecutive Law Enforcement Accreditation Award in Colorado Springs, Colorado on November 22, 2003. The department's first Accreditation Award was received in July 1987, when it became the 49th Law Enforcement Agency in the United States to be awarded the National Accreditation Certificate.

In 1979 the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies was created to establish a body of standards designed to: (1) increase law enforcement agency capabilities to prevent and control crime; (2) increase agency effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of law enforcement services; (3) increase cooperation and coordination with other law enforcement agencies of the criminal justice system; and (4) increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, objectives, policies and practices of the agency.

Receiving the Accreditation Award has been a voluntary opportunity for the Williamsburg Police Department to demonstrate that it could meet an established set of professional standards. On site evaluations, from nationally assigned Accreditation Assessors, determined that our Police Department met all of the 439 standards required to achieve the award.

If you would like more information on accreditation, please contact the Police Department at 220-2331.

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Published quarterly by the staff of the Office of the City Manager. Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please contact Jodi Miller, Assistant City Manager or Gerry Walton, Administrative Assistant at 220-6100 or citymanager@ci.williamsburg.va.us. City of Williamsburg, 401 Lafayette Street, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

Debris Cleanup and Leaf Collection

For the sake of appearance and as a tourist destination, it was important to get city streets cleared of Hurricane Isabel debris as quickly as possible. It was also necessary to quickly remove all the woody material from the streets so that the city's leaf collection service could commence in November as scheduled. The city provides curbside leaf vacuuming beginning in November and continuing through January 2, 2004.

Our goal is to be in each neighborhood once a week, weather permitting. Please rake leaves curbside (not in the street or blocking the sidewalk), and ensure that leaf piles are not commingled with sticks, twigs, trash, and other yard debris.

Waste Management, the city's trash/garbage collection contractor, will pick up limbs/sticks placed curbside on your regular garbage day with no appointment. Limbs and sticks, no more than four feet in length and weighing less than 70 pounds, should be bundled and tied or placed in your regular trash containers.

Leaf burning is prohibited in the city. Also, please keep in mind that we still have many downed trees and branches in undeveloped areas of ravines and in areas along our corridors, which by spring will be dry and combustible. Be careful with smoking materials and fireplace ashes this winter and obey burning laws.

Any questions? Call Public Works at 220-6140 or the Fire Department at 220-6220.

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December 2003

To the Citizens:

A very important decision for the continued vitality of the Richmond Road and Monticello Avenue corridors is the future use of the current site of the Williamsburg Sentara Hospital. As we are all aware, Williamsburg Sentara plans to relocate from its original location in the city in 2006.

Sentara Healthcare now solely owns the hospital. Consequently, Sentara has the ultimate authority to make the final decision on the use of the site. However, the Certificate of Public Need granted by the Commonwealth of Virginia that is enabling the hospital move also requires Sentara to work with the City of Williamsburg and other appropriate entities to ensure that an acceptable use is found for the existing hospital site.

A Community Advisory Committee has now been formed. This is a very positive step. The structure of the committee and its process was developed as a collaborative effort among the City, Sentara, and the Crossroads Project. The involvement of Crossroads, I believe, is a logical and appropriate extension of the work that this alliance of community organizations and individuals has been doing over the past several years in land-use planning and economic development in the part of our community surrounding the current hospital site.

The Advisory Committee plans to meet monthly and hopes to produce an initial report in 12 to 18 months. During the process, several opportunities will be structured for public information and comment. City Manager Jack Tuttle and I represent the City on this committee. We are very fortunate that Jim Joseph, chair of the Neighborhood Council of Williamsburg, has agreed also to serve on the Advisory Committee. I believe that it is important for us to bring a broad perspective to this discussion and communication from our citizens and neighborhoods, as well as our businesses and other institutions is critical to our success.

The current hospital campus, with its proximity to a long-time commercial center, to the College of William and Mary, to Colonial Williamsburg, to many residential neighborhoods, and to the development taking place in James City County around the Court House, is a central location not only in the city, but also in the greater Williamsburg area. It remains the center of population and we believe there is tremendous potential for it to contribute positively to the future of our community. It is vitally important to identify the best possible use for this site going forward and to work together to make it happen.

Jeanne Zeidler
Mayor